



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Brooklyn Frontiers High School

15K423

**112 Schermerhorn Street
Brooklyn, NY
NY 11201**

Principal: Alona Cohen

Dates of review: April 24-April 25, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Brooklyn Frontiers is a three year old High School with 169 students from grade 9 through grade 11. The school population comprises 74% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 5% English Language Learners and 44% Special Education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 – 2013 was 75%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All members of the school community work cohesively to ensure a safe, inclusive culture and caring environment that promotes teacher learning and enhances students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - This school partners with Good Shepherd Services and there is a Good Shepherd Director in place at the school to support youth and family development and provide academic support. The school fosters a safe school atmosphere where student voice is meaningfully incorporated and students are empowered to partner with school leaders in decision-making. The school has established a Gay –Straight Alliance (Club), as suggested by a student, to include all members of the school population interested, and to support students who identify as a LBGT. There is a strong Youth Development protocol where there is staff training on Therapeutic Crisis Intervention Strategies (TCI) to prevent and deescalate student crisis situations. This school is proactive instead of reactive to difficult situations that may arise and results in mediations that are tracked through a Google doc that allows for seeing patterns and trends to support individual students. To encourage and empower students the principal and director has recently established an honor roll (Wall of Fame), perfect and improving attendance recognition and other programs that remind students of expectations, and additionally offer incentives, such as school sweatshirts, incentive trips (bowling, ice skating/etc.) to encourage positive personal and academic behaviors. Student leaders solicit student voice through surveys, lunches with the principal with invitations to a cross-section of students to discuss student concerns, ultimately inform key decisions such as the types of electives and extracurricular activities offered. Guidance and mentors/coaches to address students with lateness, absenteeism or behavioral issues are used effectively. Students embrace the school's multicultural student body. The hallways are orderly and the school tone is positive and respectful. The school has an intentional focus on school culture and this has led to progress towards school goals and improvement in the school's learning environment.
 - The school has an established model where all students are assigned a Good Shepherd Services Coach (STaCs) who knows them and their families' well. Coaches meet with teachers to discuss the needs of students and brainstorm services that can support their development. These services aid in students being known well by an adult in the building was confirmed in both student and parent interviews. Student workshop/clubs/after school needs and student learning experiences are also informed by STaCs. There is an end-year retreat where the entire staff, including GSS staff participates in discussing both academic and socio-emotional needs of all students to support their learning. The programs and services offered by the school help to meet student learning needs and ensure that they are an integral voice in the school community and impact the development of academic behaviors and personal growth.

- School leaders and Teacher Leaders/Teams constantly convey high expectations that support learning so that students achieve success in career readiness and college preparation. (3.4)
 - Teachers and student College Access Counselors regularly meet with administration to identify professional goals aligned to instructional goals to support student learning around college and/or career readiness. Working with all of the schools stakeholders, the principal, director teachers visited and interviewed, have developed clear expectations through 'Success Behaviors' Action Plan, stating three main goal supports for students, that reinforce high expectations school-wide. The principal, who knows each student by name, encourages students to excel. As evidenced through discussions at the Parent Meeting, parents/families are in contact with the school through email and there is an open-door policy that reinforces and supports parents as partners in their students' progress. Parent workshops, Parent Teacher Association meetings and sessions on topics such as 'Common Core Standards communicate expectations to families connected to college and career readiness. A Student Handbook distributed to families at the start of the school year outlines programs and activities that the school offers to support their child. The principal, director, PTA members, Parent Coordinator and staff members, provide information sessions to help families understand their children's progress reports and provide information about their child's growth and what they need to accomplish to be successful at their next level of learning and fully support the schools efforts in preparing their children for college and career readiness.
 - The school has a 'Services and Supports' framework for students that provides attendance outreach, individual counseling, group counseling, crisis intervention, conflict resolution and student leadership programs. The principal's theory of action since opening the school has focused on developing and sharing a high standard of expectations for effective teaching across the classrooms. Promoted by principal and teachers, there is a strong culture of 'believe in yourself' with a student focus on college and career prep, as evidenced through student and parent discussions. A parent quote: "My child was dropping out of school, this school has saved him, and he is on honor roll". Teacher Teams have 'Outcomes Amelioration' meetings where Goggle docs are shared addressing all class rosters. Teachers identify students in need of classes to advance to a different level based on different requirements such as credit recovery, or E level mastery to boost their final grade. Teachers focus on increasing opportunities for students to meet their Regents requirements to stay on track to graduate as evidenced by Outcomes Recovery classes and skills needs remediation, as shown in the visitation to a 'linguistics' class using a phonics systems to help low level reading students. Teacher Teams meet with coaches to update information on struggling students. Opportunities are given to leverage the positive relationships that students have with teacher/adults in the building to increase student self esteem and development of skills that can transition into planning together for college or career. Grade level teacher teams meet to discuss elements of culture, behavioral issues and each grade level has increased expectations by adding in new skills and had input in hiring teachers with those grade specific skills.

- Leadership structures are embedded so that teachers play an integral role in key decisions that affect student learning across the school. (4.2)
 - The school's framework amongst staff includes norming grading processes, planning instructional practices, conducting inter-visitations, debriefing and communicating school wide recommendations to the instructional cabinet for decision making. This process of professional collaborations has strengthened the instructional capacity of teachers as evidenced by teacher evaluation data and the schools observation tracker. Due to its small size, many teachers hold leadership positions and contribute their voice in making decisions that affect their department. Scheduling accommodation by the administration are made so that teachers are provided with opportunities to observe one another to receive feedback on their instructional practices and learn. For example, one teacher wanted to make the classroom end review more student centered. Therefore, she brought the idea to the team and the team assisted in developing a concept map lesson plan and strengthening the scaffolding of strategies to support students in developing their own concept map as an exit ticket. All teachers meet at least weekly as teams with well-established routines for agenda setting, facilitation, sharing notes and protocols for reviewing student work. Together, teachers update curricula, design performance tasks and rubrics, and evaluate student work. Teachers analyze key elements of their lessons and student work with peer input as evidenced in the Mathematics and English Team Meetings. In some cases, the teams are supported by outside consultants and in-house coaches from Good Shepard Services. There is ample use of meeting time through strategic use of common prep times. Special Education teachers also meet outside of school hours in addition to regular weekly meeting times. This purposeful and collaborative planning time leads to effective instructional use of all adults in co-teaching classes, many which exist in the school. Teacher practice and mastery of goals for groups of students is evidenced through feedback on content and skills being covered in each class with outcomes as a priority.
 - An exceptionally strong culture of professional learning communities with increased trust in distributed leadership, better communication about what is happening across grades, and coherence of team planning work exists with instructional support being advanced through collaboration with East Brooklyn Community High School. EBCHS has been recognized internally and externally as a school that is effective in developing teacher potential. In addition, the shared leadership of the school with a Department of Education Principal and a Good Shepherd Service Director, has facilitative teacher input, focusing on academic as well as social emotional needs.
- The school uses assessments aligned to the curriculum to acquire a good understanding of the performance of students in order to adjust curricular decisions resulting in effective adjustments to meet student learning. (2.2)
 - Brooklyn Frontiers High School was selected to participate in the Transfer School Common Core Institute (TSCCI) project. This professional development focused on integrating CCLS into their instructional approaches and student assessments. The staff uses a variety of assessments to assist in accurately identifying student strengths and weaknesses. The schools grading policy is evident in the student

handbook and the staff uses rubrics that are task specific to assess student performance and provide specific comments relative to student work. Common rubrics across all grades and subjects are used to establish consistency and alignment. These systems help to provide teachers actionable feedback about student progress as well as aid in informing instructional and curricula decisions resulting in the effective tracking of student growth and achievement.

- There is good consistency in how teachers collect, analyze and share feedback with students and other teachers as they adjust lesson and unit planning based on their analysis of student work. The teacher teams use item analysis to clearly pinpoint specific skills and standards where students need additional support as a means of pushing academic achievement. Teachers use rubrics/checklists based on outcomes, to gather information about students' progress during lessons. Benchmark and unit assessments are aligned with key standards and curricula, and anchor papers, are used as models of student work that is aligned to outcomes that provide scaffolding as needed. Teachers articulated a clear goal/outcome in every lesson plan of the classes observed. Students at both meetings speak knowledgeably about their achievement and next steps/goals with references about their achievement in relation to common rubrics across subject areas, which serve as practical guideposts for understanding how to maximize academic achievement.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine the school's curricula to align to Common Core Learning Standards with a focus on key standards in order to provide rigorous and relevant academic experiences that support all learners. (1.1)
 - Teachers are seeking to increase rigor of what students know by adapting planned units of study to align with Common Core Standards to build coherence around critical thinking. Planning documents show that there is a school wide commitment to embedding CCLS as well as text based argumentative writing skills across the curricula. The school is in the early phases of full curricula alignment to the CCLS in all grades and subjects. Although planning indicated groupings of students and adjustments to activities intended to provide multiple entry points to curricula, some lessons did not reflect the purposeful use of data to thoughtfully inform revisions that provide the Special Education students and other struggling learning meaningful access to the curricula and to academic tasks that foster cognitive engagement. The staff employs a multitude of resources focused on CCLS, curriculum writing and teacher pedagogy. Some units are beginning to have explicit activities that incorporate the integration of the instructional shifts and lessons plans further reinforce these moves. However, this work is emerging and is not yet fully evident in a coherent way in all content areas resulting in the inability to fully promote rigorous and relevant academic experiences. Although lesson plans are aligned to CCLS instructional practice, activities inconsistently promote higher order thinking skills and rigorous habits across grades and subject areas in a coherent manner.
- Deepen instructional practices to provide students with multiple opportunities to be actively engaged in higher-order thinking discussions resulting in high quality student work products. (1.2)

- Clear expectations for classroom practice, as outlined in the Danielson Framework, reinforce school-wide beliefs about how students learn best. Although Curriculum Binders and instructional units reflect adjustments to curricula intended to promote rigor and higher order thinking skills, the academic tasks and lessons observed during classroom visits did not consistently emphasize rigorous habits or push student thinking or discussion. This absence precludes all students, lowest and highest achieving, special education students and English language learners from engaging in opportunities to demonstrate thinking and participate in meaningful discussions. For example, students were asked in a math class to read a word problem, then write and solve the inequality with room to show their work. The students were addressing this problem on a low level, as students were only being asked to graph the slope given a y intercept and not provided with an opportunity to show their thinking. Opportunities for some students to partake in higher level academic tasks that enhance thinking skills and meaningful engagement are limited. Rigorous work products and tasks were inconsistent across subjects and grades. During the document review, evidence indicated that Common Core training provided practices aligned to curricula, however, classroom visits showed that not all teachers are scaffolding tasks and therefore some students are not actively engaged in lessons. As a result, students, including special education students, are not consistently involved in cognitively challenging learning. In one classroom the teacher modeled a mathematics problem and asked low level DOK questions and accepted partial student responses without redirecting or asking follow-up questions to foster critical thinking and higher-order thinking discussions. Although class size is small or very small, across classrooms, little grouping or pairing to assist in creating meaningful work products and/or discussions was evident. Although teachers vary strategies aligned to the curricula, many are not effectively differentiating entry points and engaging students in high levels of questions. Coherence of instructional practices using scaffolding and multiple entry points were not used throughout the school, so that all students have meaningful academic engagement and improved work products. In some classes, questions did not probe students to deeper levels of thinking. While some students in an English class were asked to explain their answers orally or in writing, other students were allowed to provide only one-word answers. In other classrooms, students were passively engaged in lessons, spending much time on copying notes, listening and being involved in primarily student-to-teacher interaction. Consequently, all students are not sufficiently challenged on a consistent basis, therefore limiting their ability to be actively engaged in challenging work resulting in quality student work products. In absence of consistent strategies to engage all learners there remains a lack of rigor observed in student work products, discussions, and uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Brooklyn Frontiers High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?		X					
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?		X					
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed